

Ernesto Che Guevara

Mobilising the Masses for the Invasion

Speech made to sugar workers in Santa Clara on March 28, 1961; twenty days before the Bay of Pigs invasion.

We have to remind ourselves of this at every moment: that we are in a war, a cold war as they call it; a war where there is no front line, no continuous bombardment, but where the two adversaries - this tiny champion of the Caribbean and the immense imperialist hyena - are face to face and aware that one of them is going to end up dead in the fight.

The North Americans are aware, they are well aware, compa?eros, that the victory of the Cuban Revolution will not be just a simple defeat for the empire, not just one more link in the long chain of defeats to which its policy of force and oppression against peoples has been dragging it in recent years. The victory of the Cuban Revolution will be a tangible demonstration before all the Americas that peoples are capable of rising up, that they can rise up by themselves right under the very fangs of the monster. It will mean the beginning of the end of colonial domination in America, that is, the definitive beginning of the end for North American imperialism.

That is why the imperialists do not resign themselves, because this is a struggle to the death. That is why we cannot take one backward step. Because the first time we retreat a step would mean the beginning of a long chain for us too, and would end up the same way as with all the false leaders and all the peoples who at a particular moment of history did not measure up to the task of withstanding the drive of the empire.

That is why we must move forward, striking out tirelessly against imperialism. From all over the world we have to learn the lessons which events afford. Lumumba's murder should be a lesson for all of us.

The murder of Patrice Lumumba is an example of what the empire is capable of when the struggle against it is carried on in a firm and sustained way. Imperialism must be struck on the snout once, and again, and then again, in an infinite succession of blows and counter-blows. That is the only way the people can win their real independence.

Never a step backward, never a moment of weakness! And every time circumstances might tempt us to think that the situation might be better if we were not fighting against the empire, let each one of us think of the long chain of tortures and deaths through which the Cuban people had to pass to win their independence. Let all of us think of the eviction of peasants, the murder of workers, the strikes broken by the police, of all those kinds of class oppression which have now completely disappeared from Cuba. . . . And, further, let us understand well how victory is won by preparing the people, by enhancing their revolutionary consciousness in establishing unity, by meeting each and every attempt at aggression with our rifles out in front. That is how it is won. . . .

We must remember this and insist again and again upon this fact: The victory of the Cuban people can never come solely through outside aid, however adequate and generous, however great and strong the solidarity of all the peoples of the world with us may be. Because even with the ample and great solidarity of all the people of the world with Patrice Lumumba and the Congolese people, when conditions inside the country were lacking, when the leaders failed to understand how to strike back mercilessly at imperialism, when they took a step back, they lost the struggle. And they lost it not just for a few years, but who knows for how many years! That was a great setback for all peoples.

That is what we must be well aware of, that Cuba's victory lies not in Soviet rockets, nor in the solidarity of the socialist world, nor in the solidarity of the whole world. Cuba's victory lies in the unity, the labour, and the spirit of sacrifice of its people.